

CHILDREN'S DIVISION MISSION AND PRINCIPLES

The mission of the Children's Division has been affirmed as follows:

To partner with families and communities to protect children from abuse and neglect and to assure safety, permanency and well being for Missouri's children.

The guiding principles for the Children's Division are:

Partnership: Families, communities and government share the responsibility to create safe, nurturing environments for families to raise their children. Only through working together can better outcomes be achieved.

Practice: The family is the basic building block of society and is irreplaceable. Building on their strengths, families are empowered to identify and access services that support, preserve and strengthen their functioning.

Prevention: Families are supported through proactive, intentional activities that promote positive child development and prevent abuse and neglect.

Protection: Children have a right to be safe and live free from abuse and neglect.

Permanency: Children are entitled to enduring, nurturing relationships that provide a sense of family, stability and belonging.

Professionalism: Staff are valued, respected and supported throughout their career and in turn provide excellent service that values, respects and supports families.

Clearly articulating the Division's mission, guiding principles and practice model is foundational to building an infrastructure that supports practice excellence and results in improved outcomes for children and families.

Strategic planning, data-driven management, practice development and support, circuit-based assessment and planning, enhanced basic and ongoing training, on the job training, mentorship, increased supervisory support, reduced worker to caseload ratios, and performance-based contracting are among the key strategies that are employed to achieve the Division's goals and practice excellence and improving outcomes.

The Children's Division continues to work towards a comprehensive, training and professional development system that supports workers' ongoing professional development and attainment of skill proficiencies. Competency based, supervisory training, comprehensive basic training for workers, ongoing training for all staff and on the job training will meet workers needs and assist workers in mastering the skills to have confidence and perform in a highly skilled, highly professional, highly effective manner. Specialized, individualized assistance will be available for staff delivered via several different mediums. Technology will be

exploited as a means of supporting professional development through web-based training, and interactive, online modules and courses.

Workers will be supported with technology as Missouri moves steadily forward to the realization of a SACWIS compliant management information system. Field offices will have the ability to extract real-time information from the system in order to monitor and to plan strategically for quality improvements.

The child abuse and neglect reporting system will continue with the multiple response approach to child abuse and neglect reports with a goal of engaging the private sector to be more deeply involved with low and moderate risk families. Families will have more option available when making decisions for the well being of their children. More community partnerships to prevent abuse and neglect and support families through community resources will exist.

Foster care program goals include:

- Ongoing development of key early intervention strategies for delivery of services;
- Ongoing evaluation of safety tools;
- Reduction of caseload sizes and increased education and skill levels;
- A true partnership between public and private providers;
- Flexible funding to meet the needs of children and families;
- A reduction in children re-entering foster care;
- Increase stability of children in foster care with special emphasis on early identification of family dynamics to expedite the provisions of services.

Missouri's vision is to have a state of the art child welfare organization that is staffed by highly qualified, highly skilled employees that partner with the private sector and communities to succeed together in protecting children from abuse and neglect.

In the next year we expect to:

- Move towards achieving accreditation of our state child welfare system;
- Move towards the completion of a SACWIS compliant information and management system;
- Making significant progress toward achieving national CFSR standards; and,
- Significantly improved outcomes for Missouri's children and families.

The Children's Division will use the Program Improvement Plan and the Missouri Department of Social Services Strategic Plan as guiding tools for quality improvements for the next two years. Both of these plans are included in this document.